



The Women of the Passion

April 8, 2006

Mary (Martha's sister)

Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

Mary (Martha's sister)

But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages."

"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me." (Jn. 12:1-8)

A Servant Girl

While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by. When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him.

"You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus," she said. But he denied it. "I don't know or understand what you're talking about," he said, and went out into the entryway. (Mk. 14:66-68)

Pilate's Wife

While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him." (Mt 27:19)

"Daughters of Jerusalem"

A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. (Lk. 23:27-28)

Mary (Jesus' Mother)

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and [John] standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, [John] took her into his home. (Jn. 19:25-27)

Mary (Jesus' Mother)

Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too." (Lk. 2:34-35)

Mary (Jesus' Mother)

In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." (Lk 1:26-28)

Mary (Magdalene)

Early Sunday morning, as soon as the Sabbath restrictions were lifted and they could in good conscience travel distances, three women left Bethany for Jerusalem, Mary Magdalene, Mary Salome, and Joanna. Midway around the northern rise of the Mount of Olives, Mary Magdalene stopped and looked at the others. "Did you feel that?" she said. "Did the earth tremble?"

Mary (Magdalene)

Each woman was carrying cloths and a jar in her arms, myrrh in one, frankincense, nard. They meant to anoint the corpse of the Lord with spices, their final honor to him whom they loved. It was only the third day since he had been buried. "It seemed that the ground moved under my feet."
"It *did* move," said Joanna.

Mary (Magdalene)

Mary Salome said, "But there was no sound."
Neither was there light yet, though the stars were dimming in a charcoal sky. Dawn was behind them.
"Let's go."
"Hurry."
They skirted Jerusalem on its northern side, then turned south to the garden

Mary (Magdalene)

in which Joseph's tomb had been newly hewn in rock. Mary Magdalene was peering forward and muttering, "But who will roll away the stone?" She couldn't make out which sepulcher was Joseph's. The wall of the city was on their left, blocking any eastern light. All the tombs were in shadow.

Suddenly Joanna shrieked and dropped

Mary (Magdalene)

her jar.

Mary Salome dropped hers, too. It shattered.

A pillar of white light, bright as a blade, had shot down from heaven and stood on the stone of Joseph's tomb. That stone was lying flat on the ground.

Mary Magdalene gasped. The dawn air smelled of myrrh.

Mary (Magdalene)

A voice said: *Don't be afraid.*

It seemed to Mary that the light contained the figure of a man, glorious in every aspect and so bright that brightness itself was his clothing.

The man said, *You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is not here. Behold the place where they laid him. Then run to tell his disciples that he*

Mary (Magdalene)

goes before you into Galilee. There you shall see him as he said to you.

The light withdrew into heaven, leaving the women blinded and terrified. That voice had been no consolation.

Mary Salome gathered her robe up and started to run back the way that they had come.

Mary Magdalene, void of all expression,

Mary (Magdalene)

began moving toward the tomb itself.

"Mary, *don't!*" Joanna rushed forward and pulled at her sleeve, but then she shrank back from the open tomb, wailing, "Mary, please! It was an earthquake! It was the Romans or the wrath of God. Whatever happened, it's all over now, Mary, please, let's go!"

Mary did not respond. The small, solemn

Mary (Magdalene)

pale woman now knelt down directly in front of the black hole in stone.

This was more than Joanna could bear. "We can't tell *anyone*," she cried, and dashed after Mary Salome.

Mary Magdalene bent forward and stretched her hand into the shadow of the sepulcher. Cold air. A dead air, but no odor. On the right side in darkness she

Mary (Magdalene)

touched a flank of hewn stone. With her fingers' tips she measured upward one cubit and came to its surface: this was the ledge upon which they had laid the body of the Lord. She reached deeper in darkness, preparing to touch his rigid corpse – but found nothing. Felt nothing. There was nothing there.

Mary's stomach twisted. He was *gone!*

(Walter Wangerin, *The Book of God*, p. 816-818)